

WAS BLACKSPOT A PROBLEM?

By Albert Ford

(adapted from the November – December MRS Newsletter)

In winter it is too late to do anything about last year's blackspot, but certainly well in time to make plans for better control next year.

Ask yourself if you were sufficiently conscientious this past year with your spray program. Did you spray regularly? Did you cover both sides of the foliage? Did you alternate brands of spray periodically? Did you re-spray after a heavy rain? If you answer affirmatively to these simple questions and were unhappy about the amount of blackspot on your roses this year, it is time to rethink and redo your spray program.

In 1999, your Editor had a problem with blackspot. The level of blackspot on his rose plants exceeded his "tolerance level." We'll experience a certain amount of blackspot on our roses until the perfect product is developed, and I don't believe that will occur anytime soon. If the amount of blackspot in your garden this past year was tolerable, then plan to continue the spray program next year that you did this year, maybe with a vow you will be at least as conscientious as last year, and maybe a little more so. If you were dissatisfied, do something about it!

About this time last year, I decided to do something drastic to bring blackspot under better control this year, and I did achieve my objective. For what it's worth and for your guidance if you wish, I decided to go back to the use of lime-sulfur spray when the roses were dormant and to use a different fungicide during the forthcoming season. Thinking of the steps involved, they were as follows:

1. Rake up all of the fallen leaves which will harbor the blackspot fungus. Otherwise, it will over-winter in your rose garden and be ready to attack your plants in the spring when conditions are right. Heavily infected foliage still clinging to the plant should be removed too. Don't put this waste on your mulch pile; discard it as garbage. The time to do this is a continuous process, with a final clean up in late fall or early winter.

2. Use Ortho Dormant Disease Control Lime-Sulfur Spray--in accordance with the label directions-- when the plants are dormant. This will normally occur, in this area, in January and February. Spray the foliage, canes, and soil around the rose plants. Do not use this product at full recommended strength (10Tbs [5fl oz] per gal of water) if there is doubt of dormancy or if there is evidence of new foliage, as foliar damage may result. If you will recall, January and February, 2000 temperatures were not severe, and as a consequence, your Editor used **5 tablespoons to a gallon of water** in a pump sprayer.

3. Start your regular seasonal spray program as soon as new foliage is evident. Decide to spray regularly every week, 10 days, or in accordance with the directions for the fungicide you decide to use. Also, use the precautions as prescribed by the manufacturer. This past year, I used Banner Maxx as my principal spray. Although it is expensive, it is a very effective product. As with any fungicide, it is a good idea to switch off periodically to a different product. It is believed that blackspot is a fungus that can accommodate to a specific fungicide.

The two principle tasks in the above are: good garden **hygiene** (clean up) and a **regular** spray program. ☼

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<http://www.mgs.md.gov/misc/mdrose>